

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY KABUL

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 200531

FOL TEL SENT ACTION ISLAMABAD INFO USUN FROM STATE 10
OCT 73 REPEATED TO YOU

QTE C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 200531

E.O.: 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, XF, PK

SUBJ: BRIEFING PAKISTANI AMBASSADOR ON MIDDLE EAST
SITUATION

1. SUMMARY: AT REQUEST PAKISTANI AMBASSADOR SULTAN KHAN, DEPT ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON OCT 8 REVIEWED SITUATION IN MIDDLE EAST. ATHERTON SAID THAT US HAD NOT FORSEEN IMMINENCE OF HOSTILITIES UNTIL FEW HOURS BEFORE THEY BEGAN AND THEN US STRENUOUS DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS TO FORESTALL FIGHTING WERE TOO LATE. ATHERTON SAID THAT US HAD CALLED FOR UNSC MEETING, NOT TO ASSESS BLAME BUT TO STOP FIGHTING, AND RESTORE CONDITIONS FOR FUTURE DIPLOMATIC MOVES TO RESOLVE MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM. END SUMMARY.

2. ON BEHALF ASST SECRETARY SISCO, DEPT ASST SCTY ATHERTON BRIEFED PAKISTANI AMBASSADOR KHAN ON MIDDLE EAST WAR AT LATTER'S REQUEST AFTERNOON OF OCT 8. KHAN
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ASKED ON INSTRUCTIONS WHAT WAS HAPPENING, HOW IT

HAPPENED AND WHAT WAS MOTIVATION. ATHERTON SAID US BEGAN TO GET INDICATIONS SEVERAL DAYS BEFORE OUTBREAK OF HOSTILITIES OF MILITARY MOVEMENTS IN SYRIA AND EGYPT. US DID NOT INTERPRET THESE MOVEMENTS AS PORTENDING HOSTILITIES AT FIRST SINCE THEY COULD

HAVE BEEN TRAINING MANUEVERS AND NORMAL ROTATION OF FORCES. ONLY IN LAST HOURS BEFORE FIGHTING BEGAN DID IT BECOME APPARENT THAT HOSTILITIES WERE IMMINENT, AND WE WERE ACTIVE DIPLOMATICALLY IN ATTEMPT TO PREVENT WAR. US WAS IN TOUCH WITH EGYPTIAN AND ISRAELI FOREIGN MINISTERS AND WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF SECURITY COUNCIL PERMANENT MEMBERS -- IN FIRST INSTANCE WITH SOVIET UNION -- ENCOURAGING THOSE WITH INTEREST IN MAINTAINING CEASEFIRE TO INJECT AN ELEMENT OF CAUTION AND RESTRAINT.

3. ATHERTON SAID THAT WHEN FIGHTING BEGAN IT WAS MARKED IN EARLY HOURS WITH HEAVY AIR CONFLICT OVER BOTH SYRIAN AND EGYPTIAN CEASEFIRE LINES. EGYPT AND SYRIA PENETRATED ACROSS CEASEFIRE LINES ON GROUND. EGYPT ESTABLISHED BRIDGEHEADS ON EASTERN SIDE OF CANAL AT SEVERAL POINTS WHILE SYRIA SIMILARLY SUCCEEDED IN FORCING BRIDGEHEADS ON GOLAN HEIGHTS. ON BOTH FRONTS THERE WAS HEAVY FIGHTING WITH ISRAEL USING SMALL GROUND FORCES AND AIR SUPERIORITY TO CONTAIN EGYPTIAN AND SYRIAN ADVANCES. SITUATION REMAINED LIKE THIS UNTIL OCT 8 WHEN ISRAEL WAS FULLY MOBILIZED AND MOVED ON TO COUNTER-OFFENSIVE. ACCORDING TO FRAGMENTARY REPORTS ISRAEL IS NO LONGER SIMPLY CONTAINING ARAB FORCES BUT SEEKING TO PUSH THEM BACK.

4. ATHERTON SAID THAT WITH REGARD TO QUESTION OF HOW FIGHTING STARTED, US HAD SO FAR RESERVED POSITION IN PUBLIC STATEMENTS. HOWEVER, US IS IN NO DOUBT ABOUT FACTS WHICH SEEM PERSUASIVE THAT HOSTILITIES WERE INITIATED BY EGYPTIANS AND SYRIANS ACTING IN COORDINATED MILITARY INITIATIVE ON BOTH FRONTS. THERE WERE PUBLIC CONFIDENTIAL

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REPORTS EMANATING FROM ARAB CAPITALS THAT ISRAELI MILITARY WAS MASSING TROOPS AND PUBLIC EGYPTIAN AND SYRIAN POSITION IS THAT THEY WERE REACTING TO THIS THREAT. BUT FROM ALL EVIDENCE, THERE WAS NO ISRAELI MASSING ON BORDERS, NO MILITARY MOBILIZATION AND NO SIGNS OF AGGRESSIVE MOVEMENT ON ISRAELI SIDE. IN FACT, ISRAEL WAS EFFECTIVELY CAUGHT BY SURPRISE AND ITS FORCES WERE NOT MOBILIZED.

5. IN RESPONSE TO AMBASSADOR'S QUERY, ATHERTON SAID THAT US WAS ASKING ITSELF QUESTION ABOUT MOTIVATION FOR EGYPT AND SYRIA TO INITIATE HOSTILITIES AND WILL WANT TO RESERVE ITS JUDGMENT FOR NOW. US HAS TAKEN INITIATIVE FOR CALLING UN SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING WHICH WILL BE IN SESSION SHORTLY. KHAN ASKED ABOUT UNGA DEBATE ON MIDDLE EAST, AND ATHERTON REPLIED THAT US HAD NO INDICATION

THAT UNGA DEBATE WAS BEING SOUGHT AT PRESENT, ALTHOUGH EGYPTIAN FOREIGN MINISTER ZAYYAT HAD ASKED FOR OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS UNGA.

6. ATHERTON SAID THAT US CONSIDERED UNSC ACTION EARLY ON AND WAS IN CONSULTATION WITH OTHER UNSC REPRESENTATIVES IN NEW YORK. US HAD HOPED FOR SOME AGREED BASIS FOR UNSC DEBATE BUT WAS NOT ABLE TO FIND SUCH AGREEMENT. NO ONE WAS YET PREPARED TO CALL FOR CEASEFIRE INCLUDING EGYPT, SYRIA, ISRAEL OR ANYONE ELSE. AFTER DAY AND HALF OF FIGHTING, US FELT IT WAS INCONGRUOUS THAT UNSC HAD NOT MET WHEN MAJOR WAR WAS IN PROGRESS. US DOES NOT PLAN TABLE RESOLUTION AT THIS POINT. US HAS NOT GONE INTO DEBATE WITH A RIGID PREDETERMINED POSITION. PURPOSE OF US IN CALLING FOR UNSC MEETING IS NOT TO ASSESS BLAME, THOUGH US IN COURSE OF DEBATE WOULD INDICATE ITS VIEW OF WHO SHOT FIRST. BUT IT IS FAR MORE IMPORTANT TO TRY TO FIND AGREEMENT ON HOW TO STOP SHOOTING AND RE-ESTABLISH CONDITIONS SUITABLE FOR FUTURE DIPLOMATIC MOVES TO RESOLVE MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM. US IS NOT COMING TO UNSC WITH CONCRETE PROPOSAL AND WANTS TO HEAR WHAT OTHERS HAVE TO SAY.

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7. KHAN ASKED IF ISRAEL WOULD ACCEPT CEASEFIRE RESOLUTION. ATHERTON REPLIED THAT ISRAEL WOULD PREFER A CEASEFIRE RESOLUTION WHICH CALLED FOR A RETURN TO THE PREVIOUS CEASEFIRE LINES, WHICH ALSO SEEMED TO US TO BE LEAST DAMAGING OUTCOME. KHAN THEN ASKED IF US WOULD ACCEPT RESOLUTION THAT TRIED TO RESOLVE LONGER TERM PROBLEMS. ATHERTON REPLIED THAT HE COULD NOT SAY HOW SITUATION WOULD EVOLVE IN NEW YORK BUT THAT OUR PRIORITY IS TO CONCENTRATE ON IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS AND PARTICULARLY ON HOW TO STOP HOSTILITIES AND RESTORE CONDITIONS IN WHICH IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO MOVE AHEAD ON LONGER RANGE PROBLEMS. ATHERTON POINTED OUT THAT SIX YEARS HAVE PASSED WITHOUT RESOLUTION OF BASIC CONFLICT. HE ADDED THAT THERE ALREADY EXISTS BASIS FOR SETTLEMENT IN UNSC RESOLUTION 242.

8. ATHERTON RECALLED SECRETARY HAD SAID BEFORE FIGHTING BROKE OUT THAT US WOULD BE TAKING A SERIOUS LOOK AT HOW TO MOVE TOWARD SETTLEMENT. SECRETARY HAD ALREADY BEGUN EXPLORING WITH VARIOUS FOREIGN MINISTERS IN NEW YORK QUESTION OF HOW TO GET NEGOTIATIONS GOING BASED ON RESOLUTION 242.

9. KHAN ASKED HOW LONG EGYPT COULD HOLD ON. ATHERTON SAID IT WAS HARD TO JUDGE SINCE WAR WAS QUITE DIFFERENT FROM 1967 CONFLICT. IN 1967, CONFLICT WAS MOBILE WAR RANGING THROUGH DESERT WHILE PRESENT CONFLICT IS BASED ON PREPARED POSITIONS. IN LONG RUN IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE EGYPT MAINTAINING FOOTHOLD IN SINAI. ISRAEL MAY BE SATISFIED WITH PUSHING EGYPTIANS BACK ACROSS
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